Around the World and Back Again

Getting Behind the Ukraine Mystery

IT TOOK a long time to map Russia, geographically, and now the Western world is in the midst of a hurried and difficult attempt to map Russia—spiritually and physically. The Ukraine, after months of it in the headlines, hurled at the world as so many shells, remains mysterious. A correspondent for "The New Statesman," the London weekly, writes entertainingly and illuminatingly of this unknown part of the Russian world:

"The social structure of the Ukraine explains its politics. It is a country of the size of France, almost exclusively agricultural; practically without any important industrial towns except for a few large ports (Odessa, Nicolaieff); amazingly uniform in its social structure, with its social and economic stratification strongly emphasized by difference of languages, culture and religion. The peasants speak the Little Russian dialect which a small group of nationalist intelligentsia, professing a Ukrainian nationality distinct from that of the Great Russians, tries to develop into a separate language.

"Whether a 'Ukrainian nationality' really exists is usually discussed in terms in which the question can receive no answer. Were one to ask the average peasant in the Ukraine his nationality he would answer that he is Greek Orthodox; if pressed to say whether he is a Great Russian, a Pole or a Ukrainian, he would probably reply that he is a peasant; and if one insisted on knowing what language he spoke he would say that he talked 'the local tongue.' Or even should he say that he is 'Russky' this answer would hardly prejudge the question of a Ukrainian nationality; he simply does not think of nationality in categories designed by the intelligentsia.

"Or again, if one tried to find out to what state he desires to belong, whether he wants to be ruled by an All-Russian or a separate Ukrainian government, one would find that in his opinion all governments are alike a nuisance, and that it would be best if the 'Christian peasant folk' were left to themselves.

"All the big landowners and practically the entire Christian population of the towns speak either Polish or Great Russian. There are no more Ukrainian noblemen and big landowners in the Ukraine than there is a Nonconformist aristocracy in Great Britain—the Ukrainian may rise to higher rank, but he then ceases to be what his fathers were. To give but a few examples: The notorious reactionary Durnovo (the father-in-law of the new Ukrainian dictator, Hetman Skoropadsky), the Octobrist Rodzianko, the Cadet Terestchenko, were all of Ukrainian extraction, but none of them thought or thinks himself essentially different from the Great Russians. As a rule, it sufficed for the Ukrainian peasant to leave his village community in order to lose his marked provincial peculiarities and his dialect. The larger part of the tchinovniks and the school teachers and priests in the Ukraine speak Great Russian, though they are very largely Ukrainians by birth.

"'There have been national Ukrainian commissaries,' writes a correspondent in the 'Czas,' 'but to the peasants they were as strange as the old Russian tchinovniks. . . . In fact, they were mostly ex-tchinovniks. . . . One day they hold office as Bolsheviks, the next as Ukrainians, or vice versa.'

"Yet most of them, educated in Russian schools, were unable to do their official work in the Ukrainian language—an official circular of the Ukrainian Rada had to allow them for the time being to carry on their work in Russian. Even when going as unskilled laborers to the towns the Ukrainian peasants changed into Great Russians. One can see these men, in the novels of Maxim Gorky or of Kuprin, move freely from Odessa to the Volga, from the Crimea to Petrograd, clearly conscious of the unity of All-Russia. The Ukrainian nationality of the peasant is linguistic to some extent, but it rests mainly on his intense class consciousness, on the herd instinct within his village community and within his social class. He feels a hatred of the strangers who, like a visitation of God, swarm about the Ukraine—the Polish 'pany' (lords), the Jewish traders, the Russian 'tchinovniks,' the shady 'townees.' At times he doubts whether even the priest, not being a peasant, can be altogether pleasing to heaven; as to Church land, he holds very definite views to which the village assemblies have recently given practical expression.

"The Ukrainian peasant instinctively believes in the right of every man to the means of production which he needs for his work and in the right of property in the produce of labor. In the open, unguarded fields around every village tens of thousands of sheaves of grain stand throughout the summer and not a single sheaf is stolen. But even the most self-respecting peasant will steal wood from the landowner's forest.

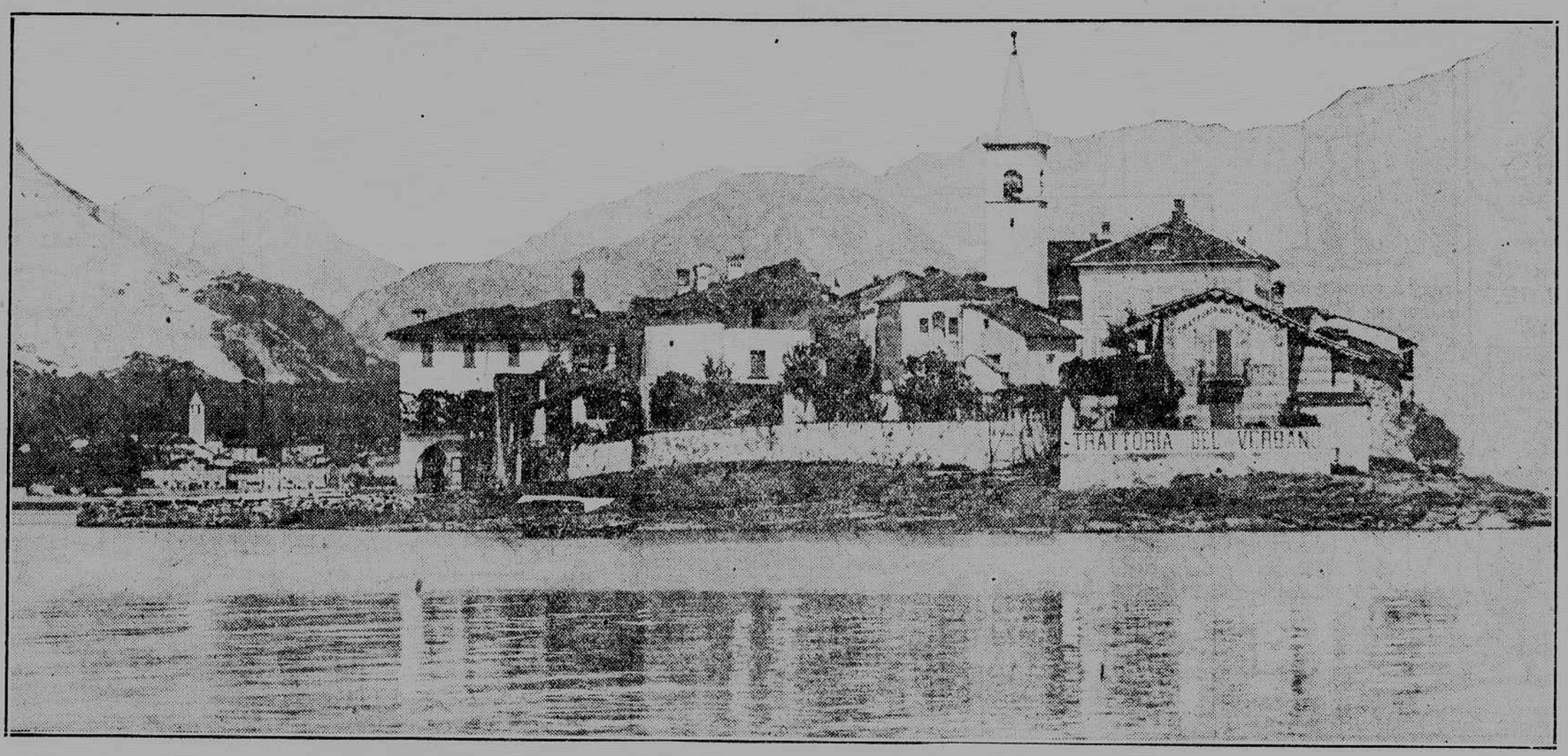
"I once caught a peasant cutting a tree in our forest, disarmed him and gave him a hiding. He accepted all that as the natural course of events. But when I called him a thief he told me that not he was the thief, but the masters. The trees in the forest and the land in the fields were given by God to all men alike and are as free as water and air. They belong to him who needs them and is able to use them. Such is the moral background of the Ukrainian peasant movement.

"Its material foundations are determined by the agrarian system which now prevails in Eastern Europe. There are the big landed estates, the 'mammoth farms,' comprising what used to be the demesne in the days of serfdom—about half the land, and usually the better half. They are run as big capitalist enterprises by their owners or by big farmers who, as far as the peasants are concerned, differ in no way from the owners. The other half of the land is owned by the peasants. As a rule they do not, however, own economically self-sufficient farms, such as one finds in Bohemia, in most parts of Germany and of France, and as Stolypin tried to introduce in Russia.

"The great mass of the peasants live in clustered villages, in huts surrounded by farm buildings, and usually with an orchard and a small garden plot attached to them. Their land lies out in the open fields and consists of small scattered strips, sometimes distant by miles from each other. When serfdom was abolished sufficient land was assigned to each peasant family. But while the internal organization of the big manor prevents its subdivision among heirs, neither law nor custom nor the nature of the holding has prevented the division of the land of the peasant among his numerous children.

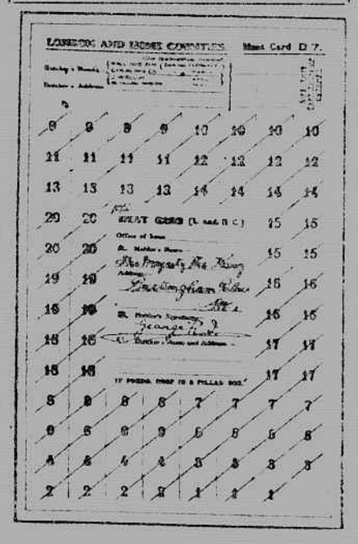
"No wonder then if by now most of them find themselves with too little land to live on or as cottagers with nothing more than a garden plot. They have to eke out their existence by working as hired laborers on the big landed estates, and throughout Eastern Europe goes the cry for the 'extra lot,' a new appropriation of land for the peasants. Short of land for cereals, the peasants have long ago converted most of their meadows, commons or forests into ploughed land. They are therefore short of pasture for their cows and of wood for fuel. The demand for 'forests and meadows' is a more powerful political factor in the Ukraine than all national ideas put together."

A Huddled Little City, Dreaming on the Fringe of Hell



This peaceful spot is almost within the compass of the roar of battle, though as yet it shows no signs of war's blight. It is a tiny island called Isola dei Pescatori, or Island of the Fishermen, and is situated in Lake Maggiore, Italy. *Photo by Dwight L. Elmendorf.*

King George's Meat Card



Reproduced from a patriotic pamphlet published in London, this shows the working of a broadly democratic principle.

From the Edge of the Great Sahara

THE perspective of the world war is so vast that much of it is lost to the view of Western eyes. It is only when a soldier traveller gives a glimpse of the regions he crosses that some idea is conveyed of the extent of the conflict, in lands far away from the French and Belgian plains, where the fighting is focussed. Raymond Recouly, sometimes known as Captain X, gives an interesting picture of Africa in war time in the September number of "Scribner's Magazine." Captain Recouly is aid-de-camp to the Governor-General of Algeria, and wrote the article from near the edge of the great Sahara Desert, where he had been recruiting among the Arabs. He observes:

"Nothing can equal the charm of the oases of the Sahara in the springtime. After long journeyings over monotonous stretches of plateaus, across unending plains where nothing growing is to be seen save, here and there, scraggy clumps of Halfa (esparto grass), after traversing interminable sand-dunes suddenly one finds oneself in a veritable bower of living green, musical with the sound of running water.

"The barley planted at the foot of the palms is of a delicate green—a refreshment and a delight to the eye. Everywhere, growing among the native African trees, are the fruit-trees of France; the apricot, the peach-tree laden down with pink blossoms, and the grape-vine, its long and flexible tendrils climbing upward about the dry and knotty trunks of the palms.

"Owing to the foresight of the colonel who is in command of the Territory of Laghouat, all the great native leaders of that region, the commanders in chief, the commanders and the heads of the tribes, were assembled in the Arab bureau, the official residence of the French authorities. The native chiefs were in full dress—long, flowing robes of fine silk over which was flung the great burnous of red wool. Pinned on the breast, or hung about the neck, of each one were the French decorations which our government has conferred upon them, and of which they are inordinately proud. Several of the youngest among them wore the Croix de Guerre, gallantly won at the head of their troops, cavalry or sharpshooters, on the battlefields of France—in Champagne, in Picardy, in Flanders. . . .

"After nearly four years of warfare it is good to see the tranquility and prosperity of Algeria. Algiers, the capital of our African empire, has become a large city, having almost doubled in extent and population in the last ten years. Owing to the increase in price of all foodstuffs, the Algerian colonists, who are wonderful farmers, do an excellent business. They sell their wines, cereals, early vegetables, fruits and sheep at high prices, while the value of the land itself has considerably augmented. There is not an acre which is not under cultivation. Everywhere are vineyards, orchards of orange and lemon trees, fields of wheat and barley. Farming, and especially grape growing, is carried on along the most modern lines and with the aid of up-to-date machinery.

"There is something about the Algerian planter which reminds one of the American farmer. Like the American, he cultivates a rich, virgin soil; like him, he breaks away from tradition and the routine way of doing things much more easily than the French peasant. . . .

"The sacred cities of M'zab, Ghardaïa, Melika, Beni-Isguen, are situated in a line along a dried riverbed of the Sahara. Only once in every four or five years is there any water in this river, and at those times the stream is carefully dammed and used for the fertilization of the parched oases. During the dry years only by the most strenuous efforts do the Mozabites protect their gardens from the ever-menacing aridity of the surrounding desert.

"But such a land is too poor to maintain the inhabitants, no matter how industrious and hard working they may be. Therefore great numbers of the young Mozabites are obliged to expatriate themselves. They go to the fertile and rich country of North Algeria, where they engage in commercial pursuits and succeed admirably. Their shops are in all the cities of the sea coast. These deeply religious Mahometans are the most astute of merchants, canny enough to outwit even the Jews. They are at one and the same time the Quakers and the Phœnicians of Islam.

"But, though expatriated themselves, they leave in far-off M'zab their families—their wives and their children—and invariably they return to M'zab. The priests who govern these little theocratic republics lay upon them the inviolable obligation to return to the land where their ancestors are buried and where they, too, on pain of excommunication, must one day rest.

"At Ghardaïa, the capital of M'zab, one stands on the threshold of the great African desert. The odors of the Sahara are borne to one on the wind. It is the last outpost of civilization. From there on there stretches southward to Timbuctoo, in the heart of the Sudan, that vast expanse of desert which constitutes the illimitable empire of the sand."

Dallas Goes In for a "Sing-Song"

WHAT community singing does for morale is well shown by "The Dallas News," which chronicles the following:

"Caught in the wave of a movement that is sweeping the country from north to south and from east to west, Dallas citizens recently under the direction of Mr. Sam Losh enjoyed their first 'sing-song,' or community song festival. The sing-song was held at the City Park, and it is estimated that some 15,000 people attended and took part in the singing. Popular airs and patriotic melodies made up the greater part of the programme. The value of these community song festivals is not to be underrated. In peace times they do much to cultivate that feeling of neighborliness and sociability that is instinct in the breasts of us all, but that, unfortunately, in the hurry and bustle of city life, is too often glossed over with a surface of self-sufficiency and indifference. But in war times their value to community life is even greater; for in meeting together this way and singing the songs of their country the people unconsciously bolster up and insure that intangible quality of mutual confidence and optimism that we call morale."

The Mail Bag of Tierra del Fuego

SPEAKING of odd, tucked away corners of the globe and the novel aspects of life they are bound to present to the sophisticated and often pampered regions where humanity congregates most thickly, here is a tale, told by Walter K. Putney in "St. Nicholas Magazine," which will be found interesting:

"How many people know that South America can boast of the simplest postoffice in the world? It would take considerable guessing on the part of the reader to locate this postoffice, for he would find it at the very end of the continent. Even then he might not recognize it.

"Opposite Tierra del Fuego is a very high, rocky cliff overhanging the Strait of Magellan, and from one of the rocks is suspended, by a long chain, a barrel which receives mail. To be sure, there is no postmaster, nor is there any regular letter carrier or collector, but every ship that goes through the strait stops and sends a boat to this curious little postoffice, looks over the letters that are in it to see if there are any for the men on board that particular ship, and places therein letters for seamen on board ships that are known to be headed for the strait.

"Who was the person that first thought of such a scheme we are not told, but the sailors think a great deal of their unique postoffice, and there has never yet, to anybody's knowledge, been any violation of the confidence reposed in it. When a sailor sends a letter to it addressed to another seaman he is absolutely certain of its delivery. It may be that one of the two seamen is on a vessel which is not expected to pass by this ocean postoffice, but the letter may have on it a request that a vessel going east or west shall pick it up and deliver it to some point where the seaman will be sure to receive it. In this manner letters have been known to make their way to the Arctic Ocean, or even to India."

La Scala Comes to Life

FOR the first time in its history Italy's famous opera house, La Scala of Milan, was closed for the whole of the season of 1917-'18, owing to conditions caused by the war. The announcement is now made through "The Musical Courier" that the commission of directors, made up of Maestro Tullio Serafin, Engineer Scandiani, Mario Sammarco, the barytone, and Italo Vicentini, has made arrangements to reopen the house. The coming season will begin in the middle of September and continue for three months. Net profits are to go to help war orphans, wounded soldiers so mutilated as to be unable to help themselves, and to the fund for the assistance of operatic artists impoverished through the war.

The important novelty of the season promises to be "Nave," by Italo Montemezzi, whose "L'Amore dei tre Re" is the one real success in Italian opera since "Tosca." Familiar works to be included in the repertory are "Aida," "Don Pasquale," Rossini's "Moise" (which will open the season in honor of its centennial), and Boito's "Mefistofele" (in honor of its semi-centennial and in memory of the composer, who has just died). There are to be two novelties by composers quite unknown on this side of the water, Favara's "Urania" and Bianchi's "Ghismonda." Bianchi is a young Milan composer.—*Detroit News.*

—La Baionnette

THEY have been a long time coming overseas, these two, but the visitors are here at last, and Nenette and Rintintin must soon become as good friends for us as they are for Paris, where they adorn every boulevard. John Walker Harrington writes in "The Evening Post Magazine" that they may already be found at Upton and Camp Meade, and the stores are selling them by the thousands. In France they have brought wonderful luck. Foch is only an instrument of the gods, the true Parisian will tell you. It is Nenette and Rintintin who have been their true ambassadors, and the Boche flees from them as from the plague. Mr. Harrington explains their utility:

"The figures are a kind of war charm. They are a survival of the smooth, round stones and flints and carnelians or crooked pieces of wood or what not which man from the earliest known records has used to fend off harm and to protect himself from the darts of the enemy. The belief is ingrained that there are supernatural powers and beings to whom the silent appeal may be made by carrying objects in which is vested some unknown potency."

Georges Delan, who drew the accompanying sketch which appeared in "La Baionnette," writes:

"Once upon a time there was a mountain that gave birth to a mouse.

"To-day there is a cannon that gives birth to two strips of wool.

"For it is from Bertha that they have sprung, those two disliked infants. She had not foreseen them, the bloodthirsty imbecile who wanted to sow terror.

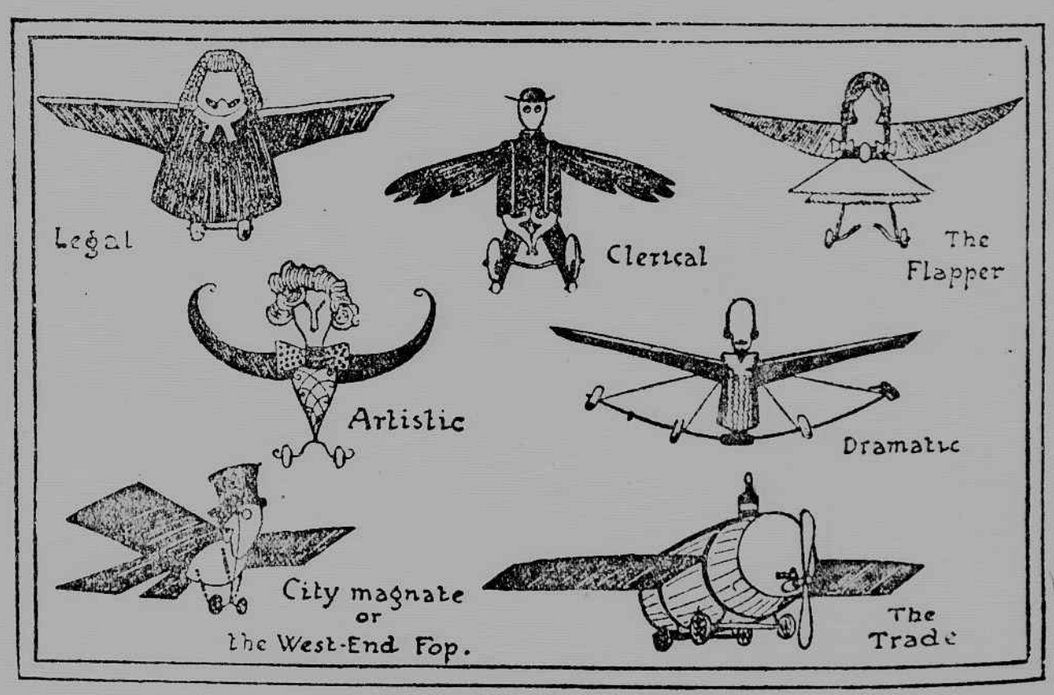
"A fine result, Bertha!"

A Flying Chair

A CHAIR of aviation has been established in the University of London, according to a London dispatch to "The Christian Science Monitor":

"It is officially announced that the sum of £25,000 has been placed at the disposal of his majesty's government by Sir Basil Zaharoff, G. B. E., for the purpose of endowing a professorship of aviation. This munificent donation is in continuation of donations previously made by Sir Basil Zaharoff for the foundation of chairs of aviation at the universities of Paris and Petrograd in order to assist in the progress of aviation among the Allies, and it is his hope that the occupants of the chairs will continuously exchange views. It is proposed that the professorship shall be called the Zaharoff Professorship of Aviation, and that it shall be a professorship of the University of London attached to the Imperial College of Science and Technology."

Distinctive Plans for Aerial Sportsmen



Some suggestions for aerial sportsmen after the war. Every man who now specializes in racy roadsters will probably have his own ideas and designs for the aerial racer and copy them from the birds. The suggestions have been taken from "Aerial Age Weekly." The lawyers may blossom out with imitations of the owl, the 'plane of the clergy will be marked by its solemn and stately lines, while the "flapper's" airship will boast its furbelows.—From *Aviation*.